



U.S. Immigration
and Customs
Enforcement

March 10, 2006

News Release

22 South Florida gang members & associates arrested in two-week operation

- Latest actions under Operation Community Shield-

MIAMI –Twenty-two gang members and associates living in South Florida were nabbed by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement special agents working alongside numerous local law enforcement agencies during a two-week operation that culminated yesterday.

Eighteen-year-old Luis Reyes, a 18th Street gang member, of Mexico convicted of grand theft was among those arrested. Also arrested was MS-13 gang member Julio Budde, 20, of Honduras convicted of weapons and drug-related charges. Budde is also the subject of an ongoing investigation being conducted by the Palm Beach Sheriff's Office (PBSO).

Among the 22 men arrested were members of violent gangs including the Mara Salvatrucha (MS-13), 18th Street Gang, SUR 13 and Los Vatos Locos. ICE special agents charged 17 of the men for being illegally present in the country. The remaining five are U.S. citizens who have been charged with state and local violations.

Those illegally present in the country are in ICE custody awaiting the outcome of their cases. They represent the following countries: Honduras, Mexico, El Salvador, and Guatemala.

These arrests are the latest actions under Operation Community Shield, a comprehensive initiative launched by ICE roughly one year ago to disrupt and dismantle transnational, violent street gangs in the United States. Since the inception of this operation, there have been a total of 2,388 members of 239 different violent street gangs arrested nationwide. Roughly 40 percent were members of Mara Salvatrucha (MS-13). Forty-eight were gang leaders.

"This recent effort under ICE's Operation Community Shield should put gang members on notice," said Jesus Torres, special agent-in-charge of ICE in Miami. "We are teaming up with all law enforcement to find you, arrest you and put you behind bars where you belong. You will no longer threaten our community."

ICE teamed up with state and local law enforcement officers around South Florida to carry out this operation. Agents and officers working for the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF), the Florida Department of Law Enforcement (FDLE), the Miami-Dade Police Department, the Lake Worth Police Department (LWPD) and the Palm Beach Sheriff's Office (PBSO) were instrumental in this two-week effort.

Operation Community Shield was launched in February 2005 after a threat assessment by all ICE field offices identified MS-13 as one of the largest and most violent street gangs in the United States. The assessment indicated that most of the gang members were foreign-born, were in the United States illegally, and had prior

criminal convictions and/or were involved in crimes with a nexus to the border that made them subject to ICE's broad immigration and customs authorities.

ICE kicked off Operation Community Shield with a coordinated enforcement operation that resulted in the arrest of more than 100 members of MS-13. In the months that followed, ICE agents nationwide joined ranks and continued targeting MS-13 members in their jurisdictions. In May 2005, ICE expanded Operation Community Shield to include all criminal street gangs and prison gangs with foreign-born members. Since that time, ICE has been using its broad administrative immigration authorities as well as its criminal authorities, including financial and narcotics investigations, to dismantle gang cliques around the country.

To report suspicious activity, members of the public should call ICE at 1-866-DHS-2ICE.

ICE

U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement was established in March 2003 as the largest investigative arm of the Department of Homeland Security. ICE is comprised of four integrated divisions that form a 21st century law enforcement agency with broad responsibilities for a number of key homeland security priorities.